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APRIL 4-17, 2013 | ISSUE 466

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ON THE COVER

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Photo by Sopotia Hantzes

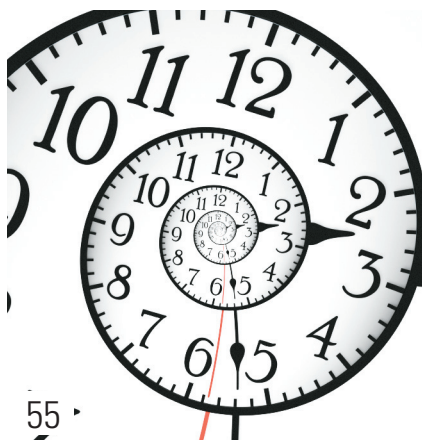


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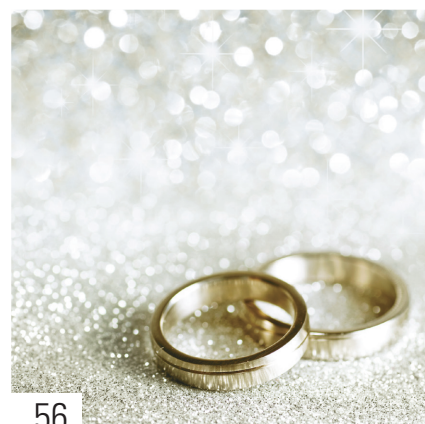


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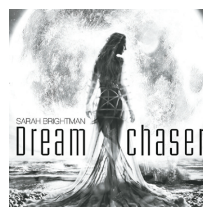


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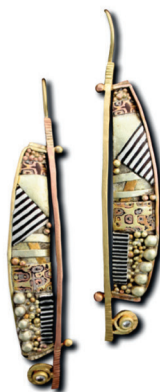
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DURING THE two days of the Supreme Court hearings regarding Prop 8 and DOMA, those of us on social networking watched our News Feeds fill with red and pink equality symbols, a special redesign of the Human Rights Campaign's usual blue and yellow iconic logo. People swapped out their own profile photos for the quickly claimed red and pink marriage equality logo and the feeling of solidarity was one that I hadn't felt since the VOTE NO campaign. Whether on a computer or my iPhone, nine of every ten posts were that of people changing their primary personal online representation to be that of a uniform message of marriage equality.

Most of the changes were predictable, some weren't. Some photos didn't change, particularly of those friends who I know are against marriage equality (who I hope to influence in positive ways). Other photos that didn't change to the marriage equality symbol were surprising; there were people who are online often and are very interested in marriage equality that didn't adopt this red and pink symbol like the rest of us. Mysterious. One of them who is a student in law school came right out and said that she obviously supports same-sex marriage, but not the Supreme Court...so she wasn't going to change her picture. Another friend sent me a private message, not because I said a single thing about her non-uniformity, but because she trusted me. She told me that of course she is a supporter of marriage equality, but she was having liberal guilt for being a conscientious objector to changing her picture for a reason that was important to her—reason enough to not join in the sea of red and pink.

My response was (paraphrased): "Good call, friend. No matter what, this is the symbol that's been embraced by the community. It *is* marriage equality this week." She didn't ask for my approval. She didn't ask for my advice. She simply wanted to state to someone her reason for being a conscientious objector and I turned it around to say to her that no matter what her reason was, it shouldn't be talked about...that the easiest thing to do is just be quiet and go with the flow.

What I did was inexcusable. It doesn't fit into my values to silence a voice that is being critical in a respectful, thoughtful way. Usually, my knee-jerk reaction is to debate the topic, not to debate that the topic was even raised. My standard operating procedure is that I'm going to tell you that I don't agree with you—and why I don't—instead of telling you to be quiet. With her, I threw in the towel on her behalf and conceded that she should follow her own gag order.

When did this become acceptable to me as an option? Why did I do it? When did I turn from leading by example to actively encouraging a voice to silence itself? I had to look into myself and my motivations. For one thing, I didn't understand what she was saying. I didn't have time to look into it—I just knew that it was against the popular sentiment. To explain it would appear to be in opposition to the equality. But, more worrisome, is that I've seen a wave of "if you're not with us, you're against us" rhetoric lately, and it's made me wary of expressing real, valid opinions.

The "if you're not with us, you're against us" rhetoric is easy to claim, but hard to defend. It's isolating, by definition. It turns conversations into oppositional debates, needlessly. It's a fallacy, because it can be untrue based on the conditions of what constitutes being "with" someone. And it puts fear where there doesn't need to be more fear...implying that I should be afraid to be seen as against you. The peer pressure tactic is a poor one to choose, especially within a community that has been historically pressured to stay quiet and in a closet.

If you tell me that it's good to present a united front when we campaign for the freedom to marry, I will agree with you. If you start putting condi-


tions on what a unified front looks like, we'll probably start disagreeing. If you then say that breaching those conditions of what a unified front looks like actually means I'm working against the campaign, I will reject that notion with confidence. You see, one can be critical of a movement one supports. It's good to stay nimble in one's beliefs. But, in our own community, there's been a different model of intolerance that's been rearing its ugly head, one that would place Lavender somewhere outside of wanting the freedom to marry, which is simply not the case.

I won't lie. Controversy is not my favorite space to be suspended; it would be much easier to stick to the popular coverage and not defend any challenge or critique of what is popular and would mean a clear victory for equality. Freedom of speech isn't easy and people will hear what they want to hear, regardless of what is said. Lavender's printed 39 articles about marriage equality since Election Day of 2012. Of them, 29 have been easily pinpointed as being pro-marriage as the only option; 8 have been pro-marriage as the only option but critical as to how it's being achieved; 2 have been pro-marriage, critical of the legislators and, therefore, positioning civil unions as a fallback if marriage isn't going to have the votes. Really. I went back and read every single piece we've published and those are the most concise ways of describing the pieces and how they play a role in how we're viewing the current campaign for marriage equality. Of these 39 pieces regarding marriage equality, 26 were written before the bills to legalize same-sex marriage were introduced in the House and Senate on February 28, 2013.

Between the beginning of November and the end of February, we were in limbo as a community, not knowing if we were going to have an organized campaign for the freedom to marry or who would be quarterbacking any legislation. We couldn't *not* talk about what could be happening. So, we brought Brett Stevens on as a political columnist to push the topic. Being that the DFL is in the majority and has in its power to make marriage equality happen, a gay conservative columnist who is for the freedom to marry but critical of the party in power is a useful voice in the conversation. He may not represent 100% of us in 100% of our beliefs, but he represents a very real segment of our community and asks questions that many of us might prefer not to, despite wondering about them. He's asked when the will legislation be introduced. Will it be for marriage equality? Will DOMA be struck down on the state level regardless of the status of legalizing same-sex marriage? Will there be a contingency plan to get rights to this community if the party in power does not pass same-sex marriage this year? Will Minnesota step up and vote on same-sex marriage regardless of what the Supreme Court does?

It's never been that the community deserves less than marriage equality. It's that the party in power may not be able—or choose—to make it happen and, therefore, when and what will this community get?

We all have different opinions about the when, what, which, and how despite most wanting full equality. Please see each other as being with us, not against us, no matter how much critical thinking and second-guessing goes into the process of "continuing the conversation." See each other for where we are, where we've been, and where we're going. To question authority and doubt its success does not make someone a "self-hating gay." To believe that the DFL will do the right thing and pass the freedom to marry does not make someone "naive" to the history of the movement. We're all in different places and have different degrees of faith in the system working for us or not; but we're in this together. Moving forward.

With you,
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BY SIGNING a new charter for the fifty-four member Commonwealth of Nations, Queen Elizabeth II has given Royal support to equal rights for all—just shy of naming GLBT subjects.

“We are implacably opposed to all forms of discrimination,” the new charter declares, “whether rooted in gender, race, colour, creed, political belief or other grounds.” “Other grounds,” most agree, tacitly refers to sexuality, mention of which was omitted to appease the forty-one countries maintaining stringent punishments, including death, for homosexuality.

A *Daily Mail* source crowed, “The impact of this statement on gay and women’s rights should not be underestimated. Nothing this progressive has ever been approved by the United Nations.”

British GLBT activist Peter Tatchell had reservations. “While I doubt that Elizabeth II is a raging homophobe, she certainly doesn’t appear to be gay friendly. Not once during her reign has she publicly acknowledged the existence of the GLBT community—or gay members of her own royal family... Astonishingly, since she became Queen in 1952, the words “gay” and “lesbian” have never publicly passed her lips. There is no record of her ever speaking them.”

Our own Bill Clinton made news recently by belatedly repudiating

the Defense of Marriage Act (DOMA) he signed in 1996, and urging the US Supreme Court to declare it unconstitutional when it considers *Windsor v. U.S.*

Attempting to explain his earlier actions, Clinton allowed that 1996 “was a very different time,” and that he signed to “defuse a movement to enact a constitutional amendment banning gay marriage, which would have ended the debate for a generation or more.” “Reading those words today,” he conceded, “I know now that, even worse than providing an excuse for discrimination, the law is itself discriminatory. It should be overturned.”

Elizabeth Birch, Executive Director of HRC in 1996, responded by asking, “So why don’t I feel grateful?” She offered several cogent reasons, foremost of which was that DOMA was unconstitutional *then*. “If it was wrong, it is wrong for all time.”

The lesson? There is no “too little, too late.” The road to “Equality” is not an achievable destination, but a Zeno’s paradox; you will never get *altogether there*, but must continue the struggle to come *as close as possible*. Patient pragmatism trumps improbable, unwarranted optimism. □

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MINNESOTA HOUSE & SENATE HEARINGS FOR MARRIAGE EQUALITY MARCH 12, 2013



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This year's event is April 20 at the Varsity Theater, and stars your hostess Bitch Flowers, the dirty gurl of the Minne-Apple Krystal Kleer, and of course, mc Foxy Tann! With a special performance by Mrs. Smith and the spinning sensations of DJ Rico! x-tra special performance all the way from the Big Apple to the Minne-Apple for the 1st time...by internationally talented Sherry Vine! This year's event benefits The Aliveness Project, and tickets are available at ticketfly.com

CALLIOPE WOMEN'S CHORUS "I DREAM THE WORLD" CONCERT

Part of their 2012-2013 concert series, the Calliope Women's Chorus will perform its "I Dream The World" concert on Saturday, April 13, 7pm, at Prospect Park United Methodist Church, and an afternoon matinee and silent auction on Sunday, April 14, 1pm, at Macalester-Plymouth United Church. Further information is at calliopewomenschorus.org. 

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GROWN & SEXY'S WAY GAY ST. PATTY'S DAY

MARCH 17, 2013

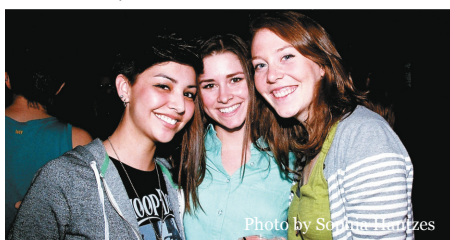


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To the Editor:

While well-intentioned and informative, albeit ambitious, I fail to see the point of your Spring 2013 Wedding Issue since Minnesota still doesn't legally allow nor recognize same-sex marriage. Perhaps disillusionment and disgust are coloring my thinking – after all, my partner of over 30 years and I still can't legally wed in a state that likes to fancy itself progressive and enlightened – but I really don't understand a special issue "celebrating gay marriage" in a state that clearly doesn't. Are you that hopeful and optimistic that the Supreme Court will suddenly allow same-sex marriage throughout the land or was the purpose of your wedding issue a simple matter of advertising revenue? Please enlighten me.

GREGG GILLESPIE
ST. PAUL

Dear Gregg:

Thanks for writing. The Spring 2013 Wedding Issue was our third comprehensive wedding issue after years of covering it in smaller features. While it certainly seems to be an odd choice given that Minnesota hasn't legalized same-sex marriage, this choice was because we wanted to show that people in the community are having weddings, anyway, and that we can be a resource for these weddings. It's definitely a political statement to illustrate that these relationships include people who are celebrating years of togetherness (like you) as well as people who haven't weathered years of the closet and discrimination. Yes, we're hopeful and optimistic that both Minnesota and the Supreme Court will make way for legalizing same-sex marriage...and these advertisers and resources will be here in the meanwhile for whenever that happens (hopefully in 2013). We're ready.

ANDY
MANAGING EDITOR
LAVENDER MAGAZINE



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RINCÓN 38

Chef Hector Ruíz has a lot on his plate. The busy chef and owner of Café Ena and the newly opened Rincón 38 is filling me in on a frustrating phone call he had just wrapped up with his insurance man. He had just finished the conversation, which is why it was so fresh on his mind and he was late for our meeting. He's a hands-on businessman, pouring himself into his res-

taurants. He hasn't just opened a new restaurant. He just built his new restaurant from the sheetrock out.

Ruíz is an established Minneapolis restaurateur. Up until this past October, he also owned and operated El Meson on Lyndale Avenue. Known for their small plates and sangria, El Meson was also an older building. It had been a restaurant for 33 years and func-





(Opposite page) Salty, crunchy Bacalao; (This page) Owner Chef Hector Ruiz. Photos by Hubert Bonnet

tioned for 10 of those years as El Meson. When there was rain, they would have to put out buckets. The patio was a nice spot in the summer, but in the winter the dining room could get quite chilly. Ruiz was tired of having to make repairs and calling the the landlord for various issues. He decided it was time to make a change and he closed the doors.

At Rincón 38, fans of the El Meson tapas will be happy to find a few flavors that bring back memories of sunny days on that patio. I asked Ruiz why he wanted to focus on small plates, "Because foodie folks, like yourself, know tapas. You say that word and you know what to expect, but it's not just small plates from Spain. I also have dishes from Italy and France."

Ruiz grew up in Morelos, Mexico. He moved from there to Venice, California, where he worked at a Jamaican restaurant. From there, he traveled and worked in

kitchens from Arizona to Chicago to New York and a stint studying with a master chef in France. Eventually, he fell in love with Minneapolis and the appeal of a big city that feels like a small town.

Rincón 38 is meant to have worldly appeal with a neighborhood feel. The menu features dishes like *bacalao*, fried salt cod fritters, a popular Spanish snack and a great dish for pairing with beer (or sangria – the El Meson recipe is in full effect here) as well as *queso frito* – fried cheese and *patas bravas*, fried potatoes.

There are quite a few local brews on tap and a well-selected wine list. There are a number of very affordable glasses and bottles on display.

The room is modest in size, warmly lit and cozy. It's fast becoming a spot to catch other area chefs after hours. Unique to the neighborhood, they stay open until midnight most nights. There aren't many spots in this part of

Continued on page 20 ➔

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Steamed mussels with fennel and red onion. Photo by Hubert Bonnet

town where you can dine later into the evening.

When asked what surprises Chef Ruíz most about his new restaurant, he replied, “Minnesotans love octopus.” We’re going through ten to twenty pounds a week. He serves his octopus or *pulpo* braised with potatoes, citrus aioli, pimenton aioli, and Spanish chorizo drizzled with sherry.

Like his other restaurant, Café Ena, he

utilizes a lot of seafood. The mussels are served in a simple, buttery white wine sauce with hunks of bread for dunking.

The menu is filled with meats, veggies and more for munching. It’s the type of restaurant built for casual grazing. But, while it’s casual for guests, it’s the result of long hours and hard work for Chef Hector Ruíz and his crew, which is why he’s got to man

the phones, sign for deliveries, prep the food, prepare dishes for his guests, and deal with the insurance man while fielding questions for a pesky food writer.

Rincón 38

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Continued on page 22 ➞



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NEWSY BITS

The former Burch Pharmacy has been reborn as **Burch** Steak and Pizza Bar. Initial tastes are promising. They're cooking all kinds of cuts of beef along with imaginative dumplings and sides. Downstairs pizzas are charred in a wood-burning oven. Beautiful, open room with great views of the bustling street.

Maybe they should have called it mediocre? **Primebar** has suddenly vacated Calhoun Square. It's prime real estate and likely won't be vacant for long. Dear Kaskaid Hospitality: Figlio 2.0 x 2 might not be such a bad idea.

Sunnyside Road says Howdy to **Hello Pizza**. Ann Kim of Pizzeria Lola has opened her second pie shop. Different than the first, this serves New York-style pizzas by either the whole pie or the slice. They've also got salads and a Korean Cowboy sub that are worth checking out.

Big changes are happening out in Robbinsdale. Travail has closed to make some big changes. In the original space, they'll be installing a pizza oven and re-opening the place as **Pig Ate My Pizza**, a charcuterie and pizza spot. Later, in likely September, Travail will be reborn in a new location, just a few doors down as two new spots. One, also called **Travail**, is a small no-reservations spot (unless you'd like to do the big ticket tasting menu for 10 people or more). They will also be opening **The Rookery**, a sandwich and cocktail spot. No one enjoys turning convention on its ear like these guys. Robbinsdale is looking like it will soon be the new dining destination neighborhood. Who knew?

Another bold name chef making moves is Chef Jack Riebel. The top toque at **Butcher and the Boar** is heading over to **Joe's Garage** to consult on a revamp of the restaurant. They're gutting the building and the space will be reborn.

Morrissey's Irish Pub is now open in Uptown.

FireLake has opened their second restaurant in the new Radisson at the Mall of America.

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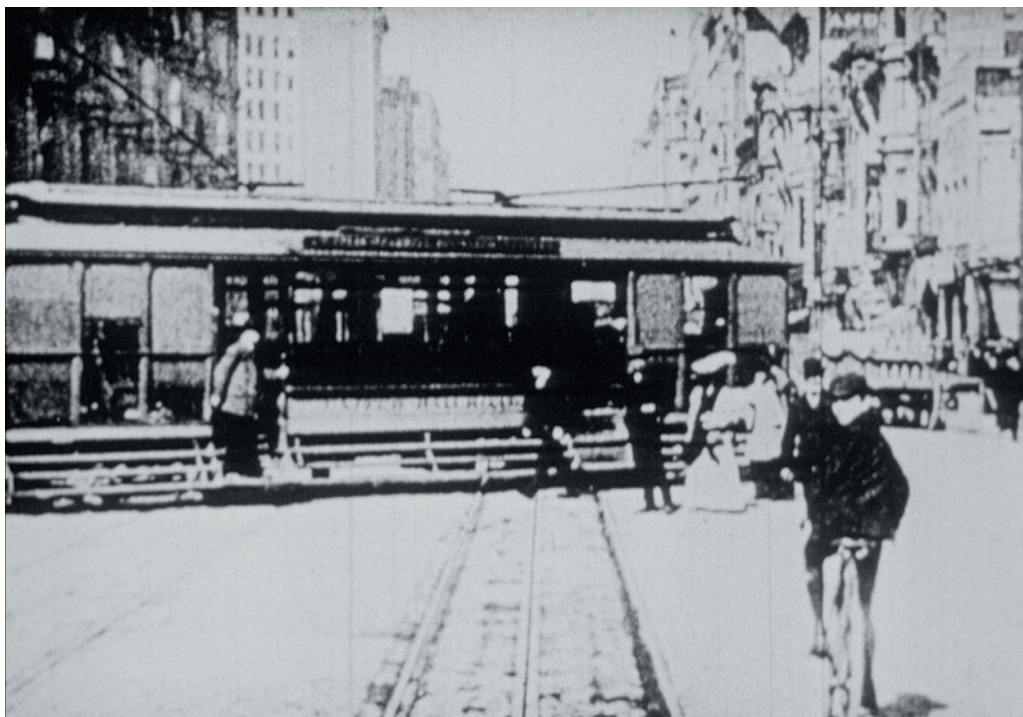
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Eureka by Ernie Gehr as part of the Artists' Cinema at the Walker. Photo Courtesy Ruben/Bentson Film and Video Study Collection

ARTISTS' CINEMA: WILLIAM E. JONES

Apr. 12 & 13

United in Anger: A History of ACT UP
& Post-Screening Discussion with Filmmaker Jim Hubbard

Apr. 17

Walker Art Center

(612) 375-7600

www.walkerart.org

Walker Art Center swings into action with two renegade film offerings about recent queer history that many of us may have forgotten or not even have known about. On April 12 and 13 iconic Los Angeles filmmaker William E. Jones's short films will be screened. They involve uniquely fascinating international material such as the rise of gay pornography when communism fell in the USSR, British perspectives, and the Soviets in Afghanistan.

On Apr. 17 Jim Hubbard's feature documentary, *United in Anger: A History of ACT-UP* will screen and he will discuss the film afterwards. Hubbard shares, "The reason Sarah Schulman and I started the ACT UP (AIDS COALITION TO UNLEASH POWER) Oral History Project and the reason I made this film is that this history has been forgotten and to put the history of ACT UP and AIDS activism into the mainstream of US history. As long as there has been a movement of sexual and gender outsiders, we have had the responsibility to teach our own history to young people. I don't think it should be entirely our responsibility, but if it's to be done right, I'm afraid, we have to do it ourselves. There may be more 'gay' men and 'lesbians' in mainstream media these days, but they are the people or the characters who serve the assimilationist purposes of those in power. *United in Anger* demonstrates how to achieve radical change in culture. That's the kind of history that has to be shown more widely so that the older generation remembers and the younger generation learns what happened and what is possible."

marriage and for the ability to join the army grows out of a desire for normalcy after the trauma of AIDS. I'm not interested in assimilation. I think society should change to accommodate us. That would make it far more humane. It still takes a great deal of courage to live an openly queer life in many parts of the United States and it certainly takes courage to live openly in many other countries. AIDS is a world-wide disaster because the model of neglect established by the Reagan Administration has been copied across the world. The bureaucratization of AIDS has dissipated the energy necessary to force the governments of the developed world to provide medicine and health care, to conduct the research and provide prevention services that would end AIDS. The political will to end AIDS is lacking. Grassroots activism can create the political will. The best lobbying the NGO's can do is free up a little more money. *United in*



Flashdance. Photo by Kyle Froman

When asked about courage and '80s activism Hubbard responds, "Courage grows out of the necessity and the urgency. ACT UP arose because so many people were dying. The problem is not a lack of courage. The lack of radical goals is the problem. The push for same-sex

Anger shows in great detail how to make political change. People need to take ACT UP as a model and figure out the strategies and tactics that work in their particular political situation, whether in the service of AIDS activism or any other progressive political goal."

Continued on page 26 ➔

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Pictured: Sonja Parks. Photo by Travis Anderson

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LOVER

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Photo: V.P. Virtuccio

Glitter Garden

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The Kinsey Sicks in *America's Next Top Bachelor Housewife Celebrity Hoarder Makeover Star Gone Wild!* Photo by Erez Ben-Or

FLASHDANCE

Through Apr. 7

Orpheum Theatre, 910 Hennepin Av., Mpls.

(800) 982-2787

www.hennepintheatretrust.org

The pre-Broadway tour of the musical stage version of the smash 1983 film about working class dreams was actually a hit on London's West End, which is that city's equivalent to Broadway. The tour has played New Orleans and Nashville and after Minneapolis it's on to Washington state. Reviews have been favorable. Dan Kohler, who plays Andy and ensemble roles, says, "From the minute this show starts until the curtain drops we're flying high. *Flashdance* is overflowing with energy." The show is clearly a



Jackie and Me. Photo by Dan Norman

crowd pleaser with strong feminist currents and blue collar consciousness.

JACKIE AND ME

Through Apr. 12

Children's Theatre Company,
2400 Third Av. S., Mpls.

(612) 874-0400

www.childrenstheatre.org

When Jackie Robinson joined the Brooklyn Dodgers in 1947 he was the first African American to ever play major league baseball. Playwright Steven Dietz has adapted Dan Gutman's book into a magical experience that will astound sports fans and anti-sports fans alike. Moreover, when so many civil rights success stories are made into formulaic preachy affairs, Dietz's concept emerges as utterly inspired in comparison. Polish American schoolboy, Joey Stoshack (a dynamic Brandon Brooks), is mocked by other fellow baseball players for his last name and unfortunately, the adults lack the initiative and awareness, to correct the boys at fault. Understandably the taunts trigger Joey's anger.

However, his upset is alleviated when he is assigned a black history report. Joey selects Robinson and time-travels to New York, 1947 where he appears to everyone as a black boy. Jackie (a magnetic

Ansa Akyea) and his wife, Rachel (a lovable Dot McDonald), take him under wing while Joey works in the locker room and along with Robinson endures the racist arrogance of Dodger team mates. Although one, Pee Wee Reese (Adam Squalls), struggles to resist the other white guys. Watch for subtle moments in Squalls's superb performance. The show astutely stresses the importance of controlling anger in the face of injustice. James Ramlet shines as Babe Ruth and baseball executive Branch Rickey. Vicki M. Smith's scenic design captures the eras and spirit gorgeously. Splendidly directed by Marion McClinton.

THE KINSEY SICKS IN "AMERICA'S NEXT TOP BACHELOR HOUSEWIFE CELEBRITY HOARDER MAKEOVER STAR GONE WILD!"

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(800) 982-2787

www.hennepintheatretrust.org

You may know The Kinsey Sicks, San Francisco's legendary 'dragapella' beauty-shop quartet, for their appearance on Season Three of *America's Got Talent*. They're now celebrating their 20th Anniversary with a new musical tour which is playing downtown Minneapolis where drag is a time-honored tradition of course. The *San Francisco Chronicle* actually said that "their mangling of hit songs hits genius level."

Irwin Keller is 'Winnie' and tells *Lavender* "For some reason *America's Next Top Bachelor Housewife Celebrity Hoarder Makeover Star Gone Wild!* is selling more tickets than any of our shows in years. We don't know whether this reflects the diminishing judgement of our fan base or a broader decline in popular culture. We prefer to take credit for both."

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Lance Armstrong's Steroid-Pumped Comedy Revue.
Photo by Dani Werner

ing in any form. And you know who you are. At any rate, Lance Armstrong's scandal for winning several Tour de France competitions while doped up on steroids, is one of many examples of cheating the workshop actors have spoofed. Bobby Gardner appears throughout with at least one exceptionally noticeable bulge in his spandex shorts. That's cheating Bobby! The difference between harmful lies and little white lies is thrashed out as well as the way some people illegally download copyrighted material on the internet. Tisk tisk!

Gardner and fellow actors Taj Ruler, Andy Hilbrands, and Lauren Anderson enact a vignette where two married couples have formed a book club but only one of them - Hilbrands - has actually read the book. The other three hilariously b.s. generalizations about plot and structure without actually saying anything about the content of the book. When Hilbrands calls them on it, he's considered the bad guy. It could be a metaphor for the way we Americans and our government have come to scapegoat whistle-blowers.

At one point the actors, posing as barflies at a honky-tonk bring an unassuming audience member on stage to draw out their personal story of being cheated on. The member is treated to an impromptu whiny country tune that the actors make up lyrics to about the person's bad experience. Their country vocal sound is absolutely spot on. Director Caleb McEwen and music director Peter Guertin have seen to it that each section flows seamlessly into the other. Dan Peltzman is this delightfully mischievous production's technical director. □

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Life Doesn't Just Get Better, It Gets Amazing

With an increase in school bullying and teenage suicide, many groups have come forth with their own message of how “It Gets Better.” Teens just need to push through these rough years knowing that someone, somewhere, loves them for who they are and life will get better eventually. The Twin Cities Gay Men’s Chorus (TCGMC) has responded by creating their spring concert *It Gets Amazing*.

This performance will be a two act production. The first act features *Testimony*, written by *Wicked* and *Godspell* composer Stephen Schwartz, which has been particularly challenging for the men of the Chorus. *Testimony* is based on letters written by children who contemplated suicide; the lyrics are the actual words they wrote. The tone changes midway, where now the men of the Chorus are singing lyrics of words written by kids who realized that life was worth living. The concert title comes from some of these lyrics: “life doesn’t just get better, it gets amazing and astounding.” Composed for the GLBT choral movement, *Testimony* weaves lyrics of despair and hope with beautiful music to create a profound piece of artistry. Schwartz has set the heartfelt words from the “It Gets Better” videos to music, weaving them into a breathtaking and emotional new masterpiece that speaks to anyone who has ever felt out of place.

In the second act, the Chorus proudly revisits *Oliver Button is a Sissy*, based on the 1979 children’s book of the same name by Tomie dePaola, which tells the heartwarming story about a boy who likes to sing and dance rather than engage in activities enjoyed by “normal” boys, such as playing sports. This simple story teaches powerful lessons about embracing differences, nurturing talent, and striving to achieve one’s dreams. TCGMC was one of a small number of choruses who had originally commissioned *Oliver Button* back in 2000. Bruce Johnson, one of the members of the Chorus, brought the program to a Chorus rehearsal retreat and shared the story with the members of the chorus at that time. The chorus fell in love with the story; everyone could relate to the story of Oliver on a personal level. TCGMC has not performed *Oliver Button* since that original time, and felt it was now time to revisit the story.

TCGMC was initially involved with a 2001 documentary titled *Oliver Button is a Star* produced by the Chorus, the book’s author, Dan Hunt, and John Scagliotti. This documentary not only featured the Chorus’ performance of *Oliver Button*, but also told the personal stories of four people who grew up being told that they couldn’t do the things that they wanted to do, or be who they wanted to be when they grew up. One of those stories was Ann Bancroft’s: a six-year old with a learning disability who had a dream of exploring Antarctica. At the time it was unthinkable. How can that possibly be an appropriate thing for a girl? But Bancroft did it. Her story, and now through her Foundation, is all about giving girls the opportunity to be who they want to be.

Bancroft has signed on to narrate this revival performance of *Oliver Button*. “I am really excited about this opportunity,” Bancroft says. “It’s an honor to be with the Twin Cities Gay Men’s Chorus as



(From top) Ben Riggs, Artistic Director; Ann Bancroft. Photos by Sophia Hantzes

we revisit *Oliver Button* together.”

The Chorus is just as excited to be working with her. “I am so delighted to work with Ann Bancroft,” said Dr. Ben Riggs, Artistic Director of TCGMC. “She is truly an inspiration and a role model for all young people to pursue their dreams.”

Rehearsal for this performance has been an emotional journey. The idea behind *It Gets Amazing* was to focus on issues that the community is facing today. And these are issues that the members of the Chorus have had to deal with when they were growing up; being bullied, being considered “different.” The lyrics in the songs hit home for many members of the Chorus.

“Rehearsing *Testimony* week-in and week-out has also been an unexpectedly challenging experience,” said Riggs. “For some of our members the issue of bullying and intolerance struck extremely close to home; for others, it was the pain of past addictions, lost relationships, and depression. In every instance, I have watched our members share their struggles with the chorus community and find solace in our shared story.”

The Chorus’ executive director, Jeff Heine, echoed these sentiments. “I joke with the guys in the Chorus that I have no emotions, I don’t cry or get too emotionally involved in our concerts,” he said. “And here I am crying at rehearsal the first time I hear the guys sing *Testimony*. It is an incredible piece of music and I am so proud of the guys for dedicating so much time and effort to master singing it for our audience.”

Heine and Riggs knew that the concert would be emotional for the audience, but they did not expect the depth of emotions members of the Chorus were dealing with during rehearsals. “There will be a moment in the concert where we will remember some of our younger brothers and sisters who took their own lives – many of them less than an hour’s drive from where we will be performing,” Heine said. “The two songs we sing during this tribute (*Bring Him Home*” from *Les Miserables* and Eric Whitacre’s *The Seal Lullaby*) are powerful, moving pieces on their own and gain a deeper emotional resonance in this context.”

Heine says that when TCGMC originally performed *Oliver Button*, they had no idea of the challenges people would be facing in schools today. “And we are not just talking about kids who identify as LGTBQ – any kid who is seen as “different” is subject to acts of cruelty,” he said. “So in some ways, you feel like nothing has changed since we first sang *Oliver Button*.” However, he mentions that this message is combined with personal stories from members of the Chorus who found what they were looking for – acceptance, belonging, a “safe place” where they could be themselves.

“It is our hope that at the end of the evening, our audience will leave with a message of inspiration and hope that life doesn’t just get better...it gets amazing” said Riggs. “We hope that they leave with a sense of wanting to do something to help our younger brothers and sisters, who are out there just wanting to be accepted for who they are.”

When TCGMC began preparing for this concert, it was discussed that *Oliver Button* is perhaps outdated with an unrealistic ending for the present day. “We would argue the opposite: the message of the story is even more relevant,” said Heine. “The issues we face today – bullying, teenage suicide, the freedom to marry – are challenges to the moral of the *Oliver Button* story: you can be anything you want to be at all. We still have a long way to go, and we hope that after you see *It Gets Amazing* you believe that we can get there, and maybe you will want to be a part of the journey that gets us there.”

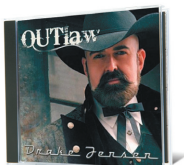
It Gets Amazing will be performed at Ted Mann Concert Hall on the University of Minnesota campus Friday, April 5 and Saturday, April 6 at 8 p.m. Tickets are now on sale through U of M Tickets and Events.



(From top) Jeff Heine, Executive Director, Ben Riggs, Artistic Director, Ann Bancroft; Timothy De Prey, Principal Accompanist, Jeff Heine, Executive Director; Ben Riggs, Artistic Director, Ann Bancroft. Photo by Sophia Hantzes

**DAVID BOWIE THE NEXT DAY**

Ten years after his last album, our favorite musical chameleon makes an unexpected, but rather welcome, return to the fold with a strong 14-cut album that evokes the mystery and relentless experimentation of his best work. It's not surprise that the cover is a play on the "*Heroes*" cover. The music, written and recorded over the past two years, mixes in tough rock 'n' roll and angular guitar solos with gentler – or at least more brooding – pieces. The connecting tissue is, as always, Bowie's signature voice, most powerful on tracks like lead-off single "Where Are We Now?" and moving album closer "Heat." Bowie's tremendous impact on modern rock can be heard in every nook and cranny here, and it's nice to have him back.

**DRAKE JENSEN OUTLAW**

The truck-and-tractor-loving realm of country music has its shares of iconoclasts, and Jensen isn't the first out artist in the genre by a long shot, but *OUTlaw* – his first album since coming out a year ago – finds Jensen exploring a mix of traditional country topics and ones closer to the heart of a long-closeted gay man. It's a case of an artist whose mind and soul are in the right place, but his music isn't carrying up its end of the bargain. His rich baritone is quite an instrument, but the songs and arrangements are country-by-numbers: a touch of twang and a ton of gloss. It's a shame, as the singer has a lot to say, he just hasn't found the way to say it yet.

**ALLISON WEISS SAY WHAT YOU MEAN**

Love and heartbreak are the name of the game on Weiss' second full-length album. The Brooklyn-based out artist makes indie-style rock with a sharp, clean, sheen. It makes the 10 tracks here instantly accessible, while also providing some musical and emotional layers for follow up listens. "I'll be OK," she croons, over and over again on the album's closing track, somewhere between a promise and a mantra. That sense of survival in the face of troubles and loss permeates the album, even on more fleet and bouncy tracks like "One Way Love," "How to be Alone" and "Hole in Your Heart." Sweet music and sour emotions have long been a winning combination in rock and pop music, and it's a lesson Weiss has learned well.

**LES MISÉRABLES**

It's taken more than 25 years, but the musical version of the massively successful musical has arrived, so now you can thrill to the whole story. Compressing Victor Hugo's massive novel into a single show was always a messy prospect, and that doesn't change in its transfer to the screen. What this version does have – along with Claude-Michel Schoenberg's moving score – is terrific performances from Russell Crowe, Anne Hathaway and several other key players. Hugh Jackman, as hero Jean Valjean, merges his stage musical experience with undeniable on-screen presence for an absolutely arresting performance. Director Tom Hooper does a solid job of expanding the scope of the work beyond the stage, even if the digital effects sometimes let the production down.



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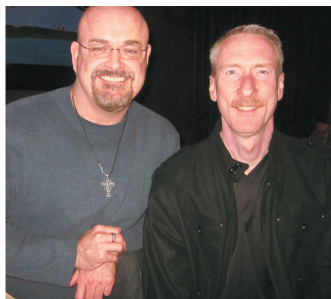


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Downtown Winona: photo by Mary Farrell, courtesy of Visit Winona

QUEEN OF THE RIVER

Jane Swenson is not smiling. Her photo in the Winona County History Center is all that remains of the town's first white settler, who landed among the Dakotas in 1838 and bid adieu the very next year. Impatient, maybe.

By 1853 the town had grown to 300 citizens. They flourished so well on this sandbar "island" on the Mississippi that they engineered a treaty to push the Dakotas further west.

Wheat and lumber fueled the golden years of 1870-90. Third Street's grand brick and stone buildings, erected by those fortunes, plus the cultural vibe of three colleges and the drop-dead beauty of forested bluffs along the mighty river, constitute the trifecta that provides the town's eye candy, both natural and man-made.

One of those early arrivals was J.R. Watkins, who relocated his now-worldwide spice and potion empire here. Tour the shop-cum-museum—you'll spot its white tower from anywhere in town—to ogle its line of products, from ointments and complexion

powders to (who knew?) chewing gum, coffee, and, of course, all those exotic flavorings salesmen used to peddle house-to-house. (Their carts are on view, too.)

An overnight at the Alexander House B&B—a gorgeous Queen Anne extravaganza once owned by J.R.'s family, continues the Watkins saga via lotions in the marble bathrooms and cinnamon in the breakfast coffeecake.

Watkins' son in law became president of Winona National Bank, whose grand Egyptian Revival quarters he built in 1915, calling on Tiffany to fashion the magnificent stained glass windows that still enchant visitors today. Close by, rival Merchants Bank boasts jaw-dropping stained glass of its own, plus a 1915 cityscape mural shining behind the tellers' desks—showpiece of the muscular, Prairie-style edifice of Purcell & Elmslie design in the style of their mentor, Frank Lloyd Wright.

Continue your wander on a self-guided tour (phone app available) of this seven-

block stretch preserved on the National Historic Register, careening from Italianate columns and Queen Anne curlicues to the Romanesque Revival which makes the city water works look like a lord's castle.

Watkins' story gains momentum at the History Center, aka the 1915 Armory, loaded with artifacts ranging from the prehistoric skull of a saber-tooth cat to Watkins' daughter's fancy carriage and, indeed, the natty white linen suit that he Himself flaunted. A timeline weaves visitors through intricate Dakota bead and quill embroidery, through Civil War regalia and a wooden "Lincoln voting box," on to a reconstructed Main Street: with relics of the Roaring Twenties from this, "the wettest town in the Northwest," and a World War II barbershop, complete with blackout instructions.

Folks from as far away as Poland heard there were jobs here in the land of wheat and lumber and arrived, 6,000 strong, in the 1890s. There's a sprawling Polish Museum to

prove it, with displays of treasures from the Old Country, from intricate embroidered waistcoats to wedding dresses and Poland's signature pottery, also on sale in the gift shop. Photo murals capture faces happier than Jane Stevens', lined up for confirmation class or high school graduation. You'll get the whole story from Father Breza, a retired priest who sits visitors down, then steers them to the vista of St. Stanislaus, of 1895, all gilt and shining domes.

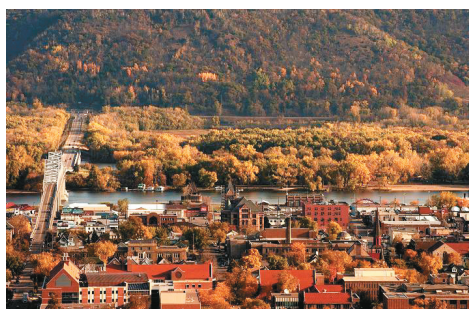
But the museum the city is most proud of showcases Minnesota Marine Art, anchoring a pretty terrace on the riverfront, where it celebrates Dutch and American paintings of ships and their captains; Audubon's waterbirds; the dreamy landscapes of the Hudson River Valley painters; and a permanent collection, unique in a town of 28,000, that segues from Renoir and Monet to Van Gogh and O'Keeffe.

There's more art at Winona State University's stroll-worthy campus. But the university's biggest hit is the annual Great River Shakespeare Festival (June-August), drawing talent from across the nation to stage Will's works in stylish treatments, backed by public events including cocktail gatherings, garden tours, symposiums and more.

The charming campus of St. Mary's University plays part-host to the annual Beethoven Festival throughout July (Bradford Marsalis to illustrious European chamber groups). St. Mary's parking lot is also the takeoff point for eight miles of wooded trails. Across the road, Village House Inn offers a contemporary B&B within a vintage homestead built of local brick. Innkeeper Ann Larson moved here nine years ago, lured by the ever-rolling hills (hey, she's from South Dakota) and the town's rich lode of arts.

That includes the bookstore adjoining the sweet little Blue Heron Café, source of home-spun eats like a Greek salad blooming with feta and olives, and the best-selling egg salad sandwich. For dinner, the signature destination is Signatures, anchoring the greens of a golf course hidden amongst the forest firs. First, gawk at the owners' collection of items and autographs (signatures: Get it?) worthy of a Sotheby's auction, including Fred Astaire's umbrella, Bill Clinton's saxophone, Bob Dylan's harmonica, and signed album covers by everybody from The Beatles to Jerry Lee Lewis. You could dine on pork and beans and still be mesmerized, but fortunately, the menu also is worth the drive—locally sourced and creatively conceived wonders like walleye cakes plumped with wild rice and sweet corn with roasted red pepper-truffle aioli, or mussels in coconut milk and lime broth afloat with kimchee-stuffed ravioli.

Prefer dining in your jeans? Jefferson Pub & Grill, rising from the levee, is the answer. What



(Clockwise from top left) Red Roofs. Photo by Paul Stafford, courtesy of Visit Winona; Bicyclists; Winona County History Center. Photos by Mary Farrell, courtesy of Visit Winona

to drink? A Brandy Old Fashioned, instructs the host, explaining, "Wisconsin [nation's largest brandy consumers] is just across the river." Perfect with a burger or a garlic steak.

Winona's oldest dining op is the classic Lakeside Drive-In, hauling victuals to your car ("Blink your lights") or umbrella table since 1938. Prices haven't changed much since then—three bucks buys you a burger and fries—but menu options have, including a tasty bison burger, sweet potato fries and even a grilled mahi sandwich among the chicken baskets. Don't miss the homemade root beer.

Then cross the street to the endless park shouldering the city's other watery idol, Lake Winona. Rock in the romantic swings for two, catch a free concert at the bandshell, or head to the lodge for free rental of canoes and bikes, or in wintertime, cross-country skis and skates. Or stroll the levee, counting soaring eagles and low-slung barges muscling down the river before it's time to hit the highway once again. □

SIDE BAR

Gay-friendly hangouts: Ed's No-Name Bar; Accoustics Café

Events:

Bluff County Art Tour, April 26-28
Great River Road June Bloom (wineries tour), June 1-2
Hundred Mile Garage Sale (along Mississippi), May 4-5
Great River Shakespeare Festival, 507-474-7900, www.grsf.org
Minnesota Beethoven Festival, 507-457-1783, www.mn-beethovenfestival.org

Maps and info: Winona Visitors Center, 924 Huff St. at Hwy 61, 507-452-0735, www.VisitWinona.com

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Remodeling

REMODELING A KITCHEN ON THE CHEAP

by Kathleen Watson

With spring finally around the corner, it's time to brush off those dusty dreams of remodeling the less-than-desirable spaces in your home! Maybe you want to spruce up an area in your home that feels outdated or seems impractical. Maybe you're hoping to increase the appeal of a home you're ready to sell. Whether you're planning to stay in your current home or are looking to place your home on the market, a newly remodeled space can increase the value of your home and become a fantastic investment.



Photos by Troy Thies Photography



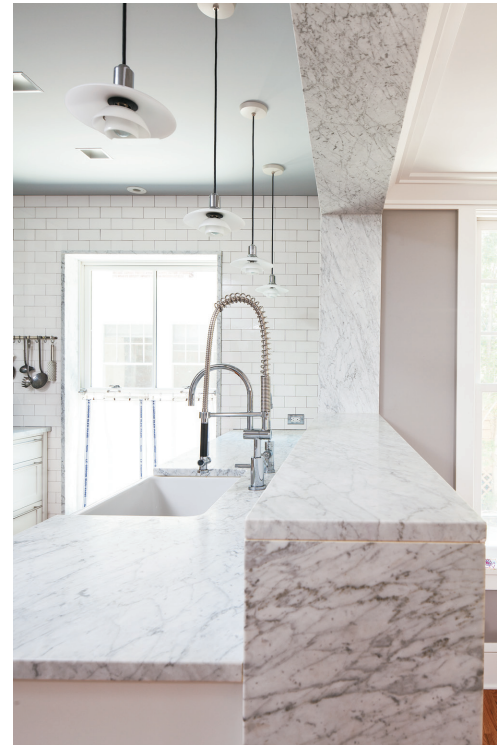
As the owner and general manager of Vujovich Design Build, Ed Roskowski has worked on numerous design projects for people looking to update their living spaces or prepare their homes for the marketplace. Roskowski notes that the most popular areas to remodel in homes are bathrooms and kitchens—areas where people spend a great deal of time and functionality is key. One of Roskowski's recent projects, transforming an awkward and dark kitchen into a cheerful and welcoming space, offers ideas and inspiration for homeowners who are considering a remodeling project.

The original kitchen in this 1922 Dutch Colonial home was similar to most kitchens in older homes; it was dark, small, and in a poor location for the traffic pattern of the home. A recent family room addition only accentuated what Roskowski calls a "zig-zag pattern you had to make through the kitchen." The small galley kitchen was poorly lit and seemed cramped. The space simply was not working for the homeowners, and something needed to be done in order to transform the kitchen into an aesthetically pleasing, "bright and more workable" space.

There was one huge problem standing in the way: the kitchen's location was completely landlocked. Walls between other rooms, and an elevation change between the kitchen and the living room prohibited much expansion of the kitchen. The design team had to work with what was available. Roskowski notes, "It's challenging when you're remodeling to change the locations of kitchens and bathrooms. It's never impossible, but it's frequently cost prohibitive...you have to work within the confines of the space as it is."

But small structural changes ended up making a big difference. By relocating the stairs between the kitchen and the living room, the traffic pattern was improved. Part of the existing wall between the living room and kitchen was opened up in order to create a more open plan and allow people to converse freely throughout the adjoining spaces. This was done by creating a continuous white marble jamb that framed the kitchen area and invited a lighter, roomier feeling into the narrow kitchen. Cabinetry was moved into more logical areas in order to open up the area between the kitchen and the living room. Finally, a large window was added in the kitchen, allowing natural sunlight to brighten up the room.

Once the structure and traffic flow were altered, it was time to focus on improving the aesthetic atmosphere of the space. One major aspect of the design



The original kitchen in this 1922 Dutch Colonial home was similar to most kitchens in older homes; it was dark, small, and in a poor location for the traffic pattern of the home. A recent family room addition only accentuated what Roskowski calls a "zig-zag pattern you had to make through the kitchen." The small galley kitchen was poorly lit and seemed cramped. The space simply was not working



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that improved the feel of the kitchen was to simplify the finishes. A smaller space demands simplicity, and this simplicity makes the space seem larger, cleaner, and brighter. Floor tiles were replaced with continuous hardwood flooring into the adjoining areas, and handmade white subway tiles were placed on the walls to create a sense of order. Roskowsinski recalls, "We worked hard on our tile layout so we had full tiles everywhere. When you're in a smaller space, the details are important because they're noticeable. We wanted to have all our tile walls so we didn't end up with cut tiles at the ceiling or the backsplash. That was very challenging."

After the remodeling, the kitchen is now considered a Minimalist kitchen. Roskowsinski says that definition has to do mainly with the decision to use a minimal amount of finishing and cabinetry. "There's a lot of consistency in materials that we used so that we're carrying the same feel, repeating the same things over again. That's driven, again, by the size and scale of the space and wanting to keep the finishes simple and not letting things get too busy. It's a little softer on the eyes, a little more comfortable to be in that space." The kitchen also has some slightly Scandinavian influences, which have recently become much more popular in kitchen designs. Lighter, softer color palettes and white painted cabinetry help lighten the areas up.

Though this kitchen was remodeled for homeowners who planned to stay in their home, many of the design elements can be used when planning a remodeling project in order to put a home on the market. The real difference between remodeling to "stay or go," Roskowsinski notes, is usually the quality of materials used and the desire to appeal to the general public. When remodeling a home you plan to stay in, it's important to pay the extra money for materials that will stand the test of time. Thinking five or ten years down the line will greatly affect the materials and design style you choose. If you're planning to sell your home, remodeling is done with the goals of increasing the value of your home and making the spaces more appealing and enticing to potential buyers.

For people who are remodeling to sell their homes, Roskowsinski gives several tips for the process. First, it's important to remember that the goal is really a "return on an investment." People should be excited about purchasing the home and not have any reason to not purchase the home. He adds, "It's all about solving any problems and addressing some of those wants that the general public is looking for."

Roskowsinski notes that prospective homeowners are now looking for smaller houses, contrary to past years where the goal was to have the largest amount of square footage one could afford. But smaller doesn't mean cheaper. Roskowsinski says the trend now is to buy smaller homes of a higher quality and much better condition. "They're investing their dollars into good design, quality materials, quality layouts, and architectural details instead of letting those things go in lieu of more square footage." An excellent remodeling job, therefore, makes a home much more desirable. Also, homeowners should be aware of what people are looking for. An open floor plan is desirable because spaces are more versatile and functional.

Aesthetically, remodeling projects should aim to be neutral and simple. "It's important to not have too much going on. Keep the finishes fairly simple. Keep the color palette neutral. White (or a version of white)



After the remodeling, the kitchen is now considered a Minimalist kitchen. Roskowsinski says that definition has to do mainly with the decision to use a minimal amount of finishing and cabinetry. "There's a lot of consistency in materials that we used so that we're carrying the same feel, repeating the same things over again."

works really well. It makes the space seem bigger and more inviting." Avoid any trendy materials. Roskowsinski says that anything that seems "off the beaten path" is going to be trendy and go out of style quickly.

If you're a prospective buyer for a home, but you don't like the design of certain areas, remember that remodeling is always an option. However, it's important to keep several things in mind when considering a possible remodeling opportunity. Roskowsinski suggests that people look for their desired orientation of the home (how the house sits, which directions the rooms face) and to take note of ceiling heights and layouts. These aspects of a home are either impossible to alter or quite cost prohibitive. He adds, "It's better to find a kitchen that you don't like that's in the location you do like versus a kitchen that really looks great, but it's not in the right location." If people aren't sure what to look for with regard to how their remodeling will work with the home, Vujovich Design Build will tour homes with potential clients and discuss the possibilities and cost before an offer is put on the home.

Regardless of where you are in the remodeling process, hiring professional designers is a must. Roskowsinski notes, "A lot of us think we can be a designer and design our own spaces...When you live in a space for a long time, it's hard to imagine it any different. You put yourself into a box of seeing it as it is, and it's really difficult to imagine it in a completely different capacity. It's helpful to bring in fresh eyes." Paying for a design also saves costs with construction and labor because a well-planned design will help prevent mistakes. Making sure that the design functions well before materials are purchased improves the quality of final result.

With proper planning, a remodeling project can be relatively stress-free and even enjoyable! Though it's important to recognize the limits of the space and your budget, possibilities are endless, especially when you collaborate with a professional design team. A remodeling project can create a new, exciting feeling for a home you plan to stay in, or it can add considerable appeal to a home you plan to sell. Regardless of why you're remodeling, having a strong design and using good materials will increase the value of your home and make your home more functional, enjoyable, and aesthetically pleasing. □

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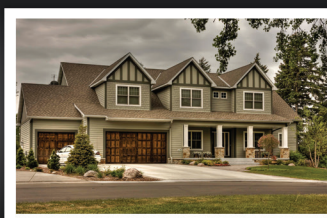
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Photography by Troy Theis Photography
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STAGING YOUR HOME TO SELL

by Kate O'Hara

One of the most stressful times in a homeowner's life is when they decide to sell their home and move to the next big thing. The process becomes especially daunting when it comes to getting a house ready to show. This means appealing to a variety of personal tastes, ensuring that the home sells quickly and for the best possible price.

The good news is that there are a number of tips and tricks that any homeowner can implement to give a house curb appeal from the inside out.

When staging a home, the most important thing to keep in mind is this: prospective buyers have to be able to imagine themselves living in the house. From clean landscaping to neutral wall colors, the home's design is no longer about creating a reflection of a single homeowner's personal tastes or lifestyle. Staging is about creating a home with mass appeal – a blank slate where anyone can envision his or her family.

So what can a homeowner do? At Martha O'Hara Interiors, our design team stages homes on the Luxury Home Tour and Twin Cities Parade of Homes every year. I've put together a list of tips, starting with the easiest to implement and ending with bigger commitments.

GET SOME HONEST FEEDBACK: FREE

We all have at least one friend who never pulls any punches – for whom tact is a bad word. Find that friend. Ask him (or her) to walk through your home and give you some of that painfully honest feedback.

Why? Because you need to know which parts of your home are charming to all, and which parts appeal just to you. You need to know that your race-car striped walls aren't as cool as they were seven years ago. That your shag carpet has seen better days. Or that your all-time favorite, Gretsky-signed jersey might not belong in the dining room.

And for goodness sake, don't get mad at your friend for being honest. Say thank you – even if you're seething over the idea that your living room walls decals aren't as cool as you thought. Just say thank you.

Your friend has done you a favor today, and probably made you some money. After all, people will pay more for a dream home than for a place they think they can make work.

CLEAN UP THE CLUTTER: FREE

Now that you know which parts of your home are working, it's time to get to work. Step one is to go through your home and clear out anything detracting from your home's best features. Accessories and art are great, but a bookshelf shouldn't be filled to overflowing, and your family pictures don't need to clog your walls. Remember, someone else needs to imagine owning this home. That's pretty difficult to do if images of your family and friends are hanging all over the place.

REARRANGE THE FURNITURE: FREE

This isn't a new tip, but it is often ignored – and that's a huge mistake. Your home is arranged for how you use it. Maybe a sofa



Without the light fixtures, painted cabinets and lovely tile, this would be a completely different kitchen.

is blocking a fireplace that you never use. Perhaps your blinds are perpetually shut to keep out the light. Maybe you use your den as an art studio.

Now it's time to arrange the furniture so that it shows off all the best attributes of every room, and gives people room to imagine how they will use each space. Fireplaces and windows make great focal points. Don't block beautiful millwork unnecessarily. Worry less over how you will use a room while your house is on the market and more about how the room looks to someone who has never seen it before.

Ask yourself questions like, how do my eyes travel through the space? What is the first thing I notice when I enter? Does the room feel cluttered? Does it feel sparse? Adjust accordingly.

PAINT & LIGHTING: \$50-\$150 PER DIY ROOM

You have decluttered, and your furniture is artfully arranged. Now it's time to make things look new again. Over the years, the paint on your walls has gotten marked up a bit. You might even have some original light fixtures from 1963. It's time to fix that.

Painting your interior will give your home a clean look and fresh paint smell, signaling that you've cared for the home. Since you were smart enough to ask your friend about any eye-sores in your house, you now also know that some of your room colors need to change.

I know you love your purple living room or turquoise kitchen, but you're in staging mode now. Make it as easy as possible for your prospective buyer to image calling your house 'home.' Create a blank slate by using light neutrals, from gray to beige.

MODERN SOLUTIONS: \$500-\$1500

If you think your home feels outdated, consider installing a home entertainment solution. Homebuyers spend a lot of time worrying about where they will put the flat screen or hide the electronics. Solve that problem in advance by mounting your television above the mantle and having it neatly framed or installing some custom built-ins where electronics can be tucked away. Suddenly your home is one they'll remember.

FRESH LOOK: \$1000-\$2000

If you want to take things a step further, there is a simple way to give your interior a new look without replacing your furniture. Collect pillows, accessories, art, bedding and rugs that are worn out, dated or just a little too unique. Head to a local home store and for a relatively low price, replace the items with new things that coordinate. You will be amazed at how a change in paint color and accessories can dramatically transform a room.

This is also an opportunity to add some pops of color throughout your neutral spaces – just make sure to choose one or two colors throughout, rather than a frenzied rainbow.

MINI-REMODEL: \$1500 AND UP

If you want to consider a larger investment in selling your home, then I highly recommend focusing on three things: your

kitchen, master bathroom, and closets.

Consider restaining your cabinetry or painting it white, for a fresh look. Light, white, and neutral tiles give bathrooms and kitchens a clean, spa-like feel. Try to avoid too much brown, which can get dark very quickly. Hardware and plumbing fixtures should match the style of your home – a crystal knob might feel out of place in an Arts & Crafts house, but can work beautifully in a Georgian.

Of course, sometimes you want to do something more dramatic – install a new kitchen island or expand your closet space – and that's when you need to bring in a professional.

HIRE A PROFESSIONAL: \$500 AND UP

An interior designer can be a great resource for you when it comes to floor plans, wall colors, tile selections and more. While working with a designer may not be the best solution for everyone, it can be an amazing experience for the right person.

At the end of the day, staging a house is about taking yourself out of the home so that a homebuyer can put herself into it. When homeowners take the time to do this right, the benefits are undeniable – from faster sales to higher offers, there is never a good reason to ignore the power of preparing you home to sell. Regardless of your budget, there is always something you can do to improve your home's ability to sell.

Kate O'Hara is the Marketing Director of the award-winning Martha O'Hara Interiors in Minneapolis. For more information about interior design and décor, go to www.oharainteriors.com.



If you aren't sure what to do with your bookshelves, consider mixing books and accessories. Turning the books around is a great way to make things coordinate.

Give prospective buyers the best possible view of the room, by turning furniture toward the entry.





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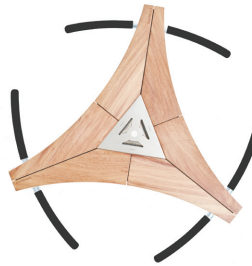


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1-USA WASHINGTON, DC

Justices Say Time May Be Wrong For Gay Marriage Case
The New York Times reports that as the Supreme Court on Tuesday weighed the momentous question of whether gay and lesbian couples have a constitutional right to marry, six justices questioned whether the case, arising from a California ban on same-sex marriages, was properly before the court and indicated that they might vote to dismiss it. Several justices appeared sympathetic to same-sex marriage, but indicated that there appeared to be no principled way in which to issue a ruling that could apply only in California or only in the nine states which currently have civil union or domestic partnership laws while withholding the word "marriage." This left the court with a seemingly all-or-nothing choice before them: either a ruling that would require same-sex marriage in all fifty states or one that would say that all states may do as they wish. Neither of these choices seemed particularly attractive to a majority of the justices.

MISSISSIPPI

The County Where No One is Gay

CNN Opinion reports that statistically speaking, Franklin County in southwest Mississippi — known for its pine forests, hog hunting and an infamous hate crime — is home to exactly zero same-sex couples, according to an analysis of census data. It's a place where gays do not exist...at least on paper, likely due to the dubious lack of legal protections for GLBT people in the state. John Sutter found that there are gay people in Franklin County.... they just choose to remain invisible to their neighbors, who are oftentimes more than happy to choose to believe that GLBT people exist only elsewhere and not in their small, close-knit community.

UNITED STATES

Pediatrics Group Backs Gay Marriage, Saying It Helps Children

The New York Times reports that The American Academy of Pediatrics declared its support for same-sex marriage for the first time on Thursday,

saying that allowing gay and lesbian parents to marry if they so choose is in the best interests of their children. The academy feels that same-sex marriage, as with opposite sex marriage, benefits children by helping to guarantee rights, benefits and long-term security, even if it currently does not ensure access to federal benefits. The four year, ten page report found that a child's well-being is more affected by the strength and stability between family members, along with the family's economic and social resources, as opposed to simply the sexual orientation of the parents, and that a two parent household of either gender combination is more beneficial than a single parent household to the raising of the child.

OREGON

Oregon's Lonesome Pizza Shop Apologizes After Anti-Transgender Slur Appears On Menu

The *Huffington Post* reports that an Oregon-based pizzeria has renamed their bread sticks after some members of the local transgender community deemed the menu item's name offensive.

The owners of the Portland-based pizza restaurant apologized for the item, called "tranny stix", which also featured a photo of the shop's co-owner, Nic Reddy, in drag.

UNITED STATES

Mazel Tov – Reconstructionist Rabbinical Association Elects Gay Rabbi As Leader

Queerty reports that an openly gay rabbi has been elected the leader of the Reconstructionist Rabbinical Association, which represents one of the most progressive denominations in Judaism. Rabbi Jason Klein is the first out gay leader of any major rabbinic organization. Klein stated: "Coming out and growing into my adult Jewish identity would not be the same were it not for affirming teachers, rabbis and other mentors along the way. I am honored to be able to give back by supporting colleagues who are creating welcoming communities in hundreds of settings across North America and beyond."

2-RUSSIA

Historic Russian Court Ruling – Gay Pride Is Legal

Gay Star News reports that a Kostroma regional court made a landmark ruling saying that gay pride events were previously illegally banned by the authorities. According to Press Secretary of the Kostroma Oblast Court Julia Medvedeva, the court found that the rallies and marches did not promote a "propaganda of homosexuality", but instead were a manner of conveying information to the public. Moscow Pride and events founder Nikolai Alekseev plans to continue the fight against bans throughout Russia, and stated: "It will take time, but we'll get there."

3-NEW ZEALAND

New Zealand Close To Legalizing Gay Marriage

CBN News reports that same-sex marriage is likely to be legal soon in New Zealand. Recently, lawmakers passed a bill by 77 votes to 44 to allow gay marriage; this is the second of three votes needed before the bill becomes law. New Zealand currently recognizes civil unions.

4-SOUTH AFRICA

Zanele Muholi, South African Photographer, Highlights Lesbians, Transgender Women

The *Huffington Post* reports that South African photographer and activist Zanele Muholi puts the spotlight on her nation's lesbian and transgender community in her new exhibit, "Faces and Phases." Capturing the images in timeless black and white, Muholi hopes to educate the South African people, and influence policy regarding the GLBT community and inspire others to share their stories. She states: "You need to change the image in order to educate people. My work instills visual activism. It's one thing to theorize about GLBT rights, but it's something to visualize the people that you are talking about."

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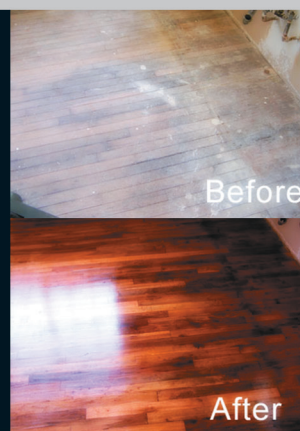
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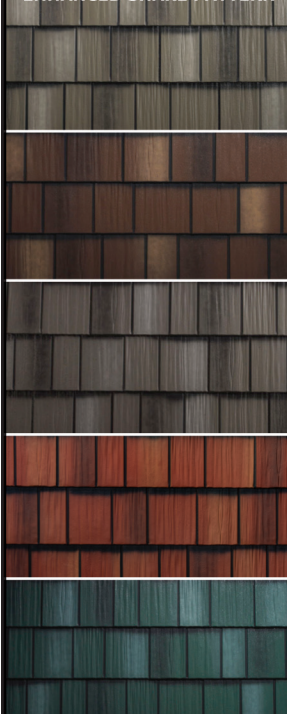
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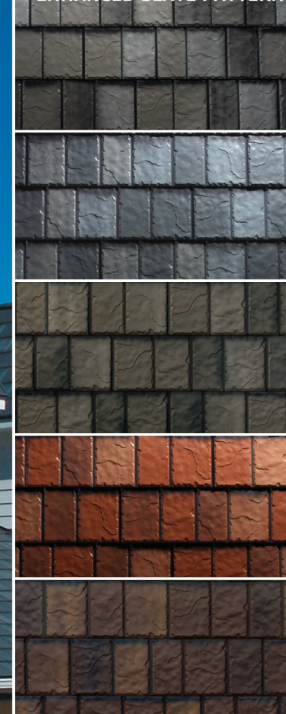
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DISPATCHES FROM THE AUTO SHOW CIRCUIT

Photos by Randy Stern

There is sort of a confession to make: I love auto shows.

This love of convention centers turned into humongous showrooms began early in life. I was about seven years old when I recall attending the L.A. Auto Expo at the old Sports Arena south of downtown Los Angeles. Back then, there were two auto shows to attend with a slightly different focus for each. The Auto Expo was geared toward the foreign car consumer, as you would never find a domestic car in sight.

Over the decades, I probably racked up attending ten different auto shows in nine cities. These days, I rarely get the chance to attend a show for pleasure. It is all work, but for a greater purpose. From these auto shows, the spark of story ideas generates what you see on these pages. A debut at one show may become a review subject months later.

From the beginning of this year, I had the privilege to work at three auto shows across the Midwest. One is truly the most important auto show in North America, the second is where most of the story ideas actually come from and the third is our home auto show.

Follow me, as I take you on a tour of three convention halls and a few other locales that made up this auto show season so far...

NORTH AMERICAN INTERNATIONAL AUTO SHOW: Originally, I had not planned on

going to Detroit to attend this show. An invitation came, which I accepted with honor. What happened after I landed in the Motor City was beyond amazing.

When it comes to vehicle debuts, NAIAS is in a class by itself. The timing on the calendar is just right, as the New Year starts its cycle. Therefore, the anticipation is heightened of what might come from the halls of Cobo Center.

My first order of business in Detroit was to attend the world premiere of the 2014 Chevrolet Corvette Stingray. Just up Interstate 75 from downtown, we were shuttled to a secret location where it was part-rock concert, part-art gallery. On stage, the red car emerged – a track-ready seventh generation of America's sports car. As soon as it was driven onto the stage, the Corvette Stingray became the undisputed star of NAIAS.

Detroit also set the stage for the debut of many new vehicles we will see on our roads soon. If there happened to be a second leading debut after the Corvette Stingray, it would be the Cadillac ELR. Based on the Chevrolet Volt, the ELR is a two-plus-two luxury coupe combining Cadillac's Art&Science design language with the proven Volttec extended range electric drive system. The ELR made such a splash that former General Motors executive Bob Lutz showed up to pose with the stunning sustainable coupe.

There were other vehicles that made first appearances in Detroit, such as the 2014 Lexus IS sedan, the new Maserati Quattroporte, the updated 2014 Jeep Grand Cherokee and the North American debut of the Kia Cadenza sedan. Perhaps my favorite reveal came after Infiniti staged a performance by one of the Cirque de Soleil troupes toward the unveiling of the 2014 Infiniti Q50. I missed the Cirque performance, but had a chance to catch a gaze upon Infiniti's replacement for the G sedan. Not only is it a real stunner in the flesh, there is perfect amount of room inside for four adults. It will also come in a hybrid version alongside the standard V6 model.

The biggest trend seen at various auto shows has been the proliferation of "concepts" that look production ready. BMW and Acura revealed two such models to tease us on their upcoming product plans. A closer look at both the BMW 4-Series Coupe and Acura MDX would show the time-frame as to when they would pop up at a showroom near you. The same could be said with Toyota's Furia concept, as it showed off many cues of the upcoming Corolla replacement.

The one debut that a lot of us did not see was the Mercedes-Benz CLA four-door coupe. It appeared at the same time as the Corvette Stingray reveal event at a downtown Detroit hotel, but never appeared on the floor of Cobo Center.

Instead, Mercedes-Benz used their press conference to debut the updated E-Class lineup with music provided by Bruce Hornsby and other celebrity appearances alongside Daimler AG Chairman Dr. Dieter Zetsche.

The rest of my time in Detroit was spent interviewing key industry movers and shakers, either in a group or individual setting. One such interview will appear later this year with a glimpse into the how the GLBT community is making an impact inside of the automotive industry.

Going to NAIAS was a huge surprise and a great experience overall. The next time you find yourself in the Motor City in January, this show is definitely worth checking out.

CHICAGO AUTO SHOW: One attends the big show at McCormick Place to see almost everything and anything automotive-related. By square footage, the Chicago show is the largest consumer automotive exhibition in North America. Two massive halls await a huge crowd with the latest and greatest from prior shows, along with its own debuts.

Chicago had some good reveals this year. Ram Trucks rolled out a new brand dedicated to business consumers: Ram Commercial. As part of this new brand, Chrysler leveraged its partner Fiat for its new full-sized van – the ProMaster. What makes this different than the current cargo van offerings is that it rides on a front-wheel drive platform. However, this platform has been proven by Fiat in the form of one of the most popular commercial vehicles on the planet – the Ducato. Chrysler added a few of its own touches, along with its Pentastar V6, while Fiat adds a diesel option.

The one vehicle that yielded the biggest surprise in Chicago was the Kia's addition to the new 2014 Forte compact lineup – a five-door hatchback. Prior to the reveal, speculation had Kia bringing over their European market lineup to join the recently introduced Forte sedan. Instead, North America is getting a more aggressive hatch that shares a lot of the sedan's interior and other bits. In fact, the Forte hatch complements the sedan quite nicely – so say those of us who witnessed it at McCormick Place.

Certainly, there were other debuts in Chicago worth discussing. Sadly, I have found that Chicago has yielded only model updates, new variants and special editions. Some of these debuts were significant, such as the addition of a turbo-charged diesel engine in the Chevrolet Cruze

and a key update to the Toyota Tundra pickup. Others were simply just to excite perhaps a smaller pool of enthusiasts and journalists.

There are two other reasons to attend the Chicago Auto Show. The space itself lends to more interactive opportunities for attendees. Chrysler had two ride-along experiences inside the hall with Camp Jeep(c) and a "city drive." Camp Jeep puts you inside either a Wrangler Rubicon or Grand Cherokee to demonstrate their off-road capabilities from axle articulation to extreme hill ascent and decent. The city drive shows the prowess of Chrysler and Fiat products leading to a short acceleration test at the end of that ride-along. Toyota offered a similar experience, as well.

Standard fare at every auto show these days is the chance to actually drive a car for a small period of time. Normally, these experiences would be activated when the show opens up to the public. In Chicago, I found that two of these experiences were available during media preview days. It is a risk giving automotive journalists a chance to drive anything at an auto show – regardless of the weather. It was a risk well taken, thanks to Kia and Cadillac.

A new tradition that became available to a wider spectrum of people is the Social Media Preview. It gave social media enthusiasts a chance to experience the show before the doors open up to the general public. Some manufacturers would have some special program during the day, such as inviting some of their motorsports stars to do autograph sessions and meet-and-greets. Ford brought out extreme motorsports star and co-host of the American version of "Top Gear" Tanner Foust to Chicago for that purpose. To augment this program, panels were added to discuss the impact on social media in the automotive industry and the marketplace.

On a personal and professional level, Chicago has become "my show." This is where I do a lot of my story pitching and business for this magazine and other outlets I am involved with. I usually come home with vehicles scheduled and a possibility of some media junket later in the year.

TWIN CITIES AUTO SHOW: In its 40th year, our local auto show still stirs the soul of many who walk through the Minneapolis Convention Center in early-to-mid-March. Though sandwiched between two major auto shows on the calendar – Geneva and New York – the Twin Cities Auto Show tries to bring the best from Detroit,

Chicago and other global auto shows before it into our backyard. The only real star from the shows I attended this past year was Toyota's Furia Concept. It has been a while since a true concept vehicle showed up on the Convention Center floor, but this one just seems right for our Auto Show.

True, the Twin Cities Auto Show is purely a consumer show with limited manufacturer involvement. The exhibits, the entertainment stage and other attractions within the show are geared towards the consumer. There are nods to enthusiasts, but one would assume otherwise.

This is where the 311RS comes in. The only product debut at the Twin Cities Auto Show was a local one. Noted Twin Cities-based tuner and racer Ryan Gates crafted the modified 2013 Mitsubishi Lancer Evolution X right in our own backyard by ratcheting up the horsepower and giving it a road-worthy ride. The white-and-blue Evo was envisioned as a track-bred car for the street, creating the balance between the two extremes inside and out. At \$49,000, all eleven examples have been spoken for.

The 311RS garnered plenty of attention at the Twin Cities Auto Show. At the media event, an actual press conference was set for the unveiling of the car with cameras and media members present to record it all. It reminded me of the pressers I usually attend in Chicago and Detroit, though on a very localized scale. It was something worth witnessing in my years of covering this industry from right our own backyard.

Admittedly, attending three auto shows in a tight period of time was unprecedented in this contributing writer's life. Though I felt honored being invited to attend Detroit in January, I felt at the end of my time at the Minneapolis Convention Center that it started to turn into a grind. Perhaps this is the life of most of my cohorts in the automotive media corps. It is not just auto shows where the grind kicks in, but other events as such invited by various manufacturers throughout the year ranging from preview drives to specific events where a debut will occur.

As it has been said – an auto show gives you a license to dream. Through three convention centers, a few flights, a couple of hotel rooms, a press room and many faces along the way – it has been dream fulfilled. You, dear reader, are the beneficiary of this career-long dream. It is indeed an honor sharing this with you. □





Power, Education and Society

IF YOU haven't seen your humble columnist out and about lately, it's because I have gone back to college. I now am enrolled as a degree-seeking student in the College of Individualized Studies at Metropolitan State University in St. Paul. My objective is to complete the BA degree I abandoned long ago, back when dinosaurs still walked the earth.

However, even after I abandoned structured higher education, I still continued to learn through experience—and much of that learning has come from my involvement in the leather/BDSM/fetish community. Now that I have returned to higher education, I am discovering the value and importance of our community's knowledge and cultural values.

One unexpected feature of my college experience so far is that one word seems to suffuse all my classes, and indeed the general learning culture of Metro State. That word is "power." In many of my classes we discuss how power operates in our society and in other societies. We discuss who has power and who doesn't. We discuss how power is acquired and lost. We discuss how power is used, misused, and abused. We discuss—all together now—dominance and submission.

To me, these discussions about power sound familiar. I already have learned much about the dynamics of power because I am part of a community built around the dynamics of power.

Members of the leather/BDSM/fetish community learn about power. Then they

go further—they use the knowledge they have acquired to play with power. Whether we're talking about a scene in a bedroom or a dungeon, or a dominant/submissive, sir/boy or master/slave relationship, it's all about who has power, who doesn't, and how power is used, exchanged, and played with.

My studies at Metro State have made me realize there is something paradoxical about the leather/BDSM/fetish community. Within it everyone—dominant, submissive or switch, top or bottom, master, madame, mistress or slave—is accorded an equal measure of personal power if they choose to exercise it. The community's culture declares that no member of the community has lesser status because of their chosen role. In the rare instance that a community member thinks his or her lofty role as a master or mistress makes it okay to mistreat or abuse submissives, other community members will intervene to tell them that such behavior is not acceptable.

Yet, to the rest of society, members of the leather/BDSM/fetish community historically have been given less respect and social status than other supposedly "normal" people. Society has given us the label of "perverts" and then told us we should be ashamed of that label. Ironically, society has tried to strip us of our power, the thing around which our community revolves. Once power is taken away it is rarely given back—it must be actively reclaimed.

One way we reclaim that power, individually and as a community, is by educating our-

selves and others. Education is important because it is empowering both on a personal level, such as enabling someone to get a better job, and on a public level, such as enabling oppressed communities to cast off labels like "queer" or "pervert."

The empowering nature of education is why the GLBT community has Creating Change, an annual leadership and activism conference, and why the leather/BDSM/fetish community has the Leather Leadership Conference—and this year, the Kink Lincs Leadership and Community-Building Symposium (April 12-14 in Seattle). These conferences are examples of learning by and for the community.

Another way to reclaim power is by educating the members of the society that is trying to take away that power. Such educational efforts were essential in defeating the Minnesota marriage and voter I.D. amendments last year. The BDSM community's "Consent Counts" project is an important educational initiative aimed at removing shame and stigma connected with BDSM sexuality.

The more I have studied the dynamics of power, education, and social change at Metro State, the more I have become convinced of the correctness of something I wrote in this column in 2008: "So many members of our community have so much to offer the wider society. If politicians professing to be God-fearing Christians have made such a mess of things over the last few decades, it might take a bunch of people formerly known as "pervs" to make things better." □



Beating the Clock

ON MARCH 12, 2013, the Minnesota Legislature heard the committee testimony on Rep. Karen Clark and Sen. Scott Dibble's same sex marriage bills in both the House and Senate. While both committees had arranged testimony, the impact of the two hearings could not have been more different. Here's what I mean.

In the House, the committee of ten DFLers and seven Republicans heard one pro- and then one anti- same sex marriage testifier back and forth lending a great deal of heightened emotion in the room. Nerves were rubbed raw as a person would make the case of how he believed marriage between two people regardless of gender should be recognized by the state. Then an opponent would argue against changing the law. Back and forth, these arguments were made. Witnesses had only two minutes to speak. The morning testimony, starting at 8:15 am was immediate, electric, and moving.

The Senate hearing was quite different, though some of the testimony was the same. The Senate hearing was more staged. The proponents of the same sex marriage bill spoke first. Each witness built a case around the ideas of marriage equality and for expanding the marriage franchise for the good of society.

Then the opponents were heard. One by one, they argued against each point. These witnesses said marriage is inherently public policy for the raising of children. They argued same sex marriage could have negative repercussions to society as a whole. It was as passionate as the proponent's case but simply didn't have a solid reason for not recognizing the relationships of same sex couples.

While the House committee hearing was vibrant and openly emotional, the Senate hearing was more cerebral and measured. The witnesses were given more time to speak. The two sides laid out their cases. In the end, the Senate committee voted to send the bill to the floor.

The House committee wasn't able to accommodate all who wanted to speak in the morning, so an evening session was arranged. The testimony continued, but after a

couple of opponents of same sex marriage, the remaining witnesses were all proponents of the bill. I was struck, in particular, with the very last witness.

Kirsten Lindbloom was one of those making an immediate and compelling case for the bill. Her testimony at the House Civil Law committee hearing can be found at UpTakeVideo on Youtube.com. Her comments begin at around 34 minutes into the video file.

First Lindbloom explained that she and her partner had a public ceremony in Austin, MN. They decided to have it there because it was their home. They hoped one day Minnesota would recognize their relationship. It has become a mission for her. She testified:

"Three years ago, my Jenny was diagnosed with cancer; it's the slow growing and deadly kind. She's beating the odds. She's pushing back the clock but every day she's fighting for time. During the height of her illness our marriage hope disappeared. In November 2012 we celebrated the passing of Jenny's expected "expiration date" and the defeat of the marriage amendment. Jenny continues to fight and with the shift in Minnesota's political climate our marriage hope has returned. As a woman facing the loss of her wife, I am compelled, I am driven and determined to make the dreams she dreams come true."

For Kirsten and Jenny, this is no longer a "wait and see" situation. For them, the window is closing. They won't have the luxury of "ten years or whatever" for the state government to recognize their relationship. It is testimony like this that moves me to do what I can to get something this year.

Kirsten and Jenny aren't alone. Kirsten was able to tell their story but others are experiencing the same situation. She spoke for those who also don't have much time left. Kirsten was the surrogate voice.

The House committee also voted to move the bill to the floor. Unfortunately, it doesn't look like they have the votes to pass it yet.

Therefore, we need more stories like theirs. We need the legislators to understand real lives are affected by this topic. There are people who want to cement their relationship

and have the state recognize their life decisions. If you have a story, share it with your legislators. Send these real life dilemmas to them showing how this matters to us on a visceral level.

We don't have much time. The "expiration date" for legislative action is fast approaching. We need to rally and compel our elected officials and let them know they are running out of time. □

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SEE ALSO:

"The DFL's Big Gay Farce" from Issue 457, November 29, 2012

"Three of Four Top Elected Minnesota Politicians Comment on the Marriage Debate" from Issue 458, December 13, 2012

"'Earnest Money:' Repeal DOMA Now" from Issue 458, December 13, 2012

"Why We Can't Wait" an Interview with Sen.

John Marty from Issue 460, January 10, 2013

"Waiting for Superman" from Issue 460, January 10, 2013

"Don't Skip Dessert" an Interview with Rep. Ryan Winkler from Issue 461, January 24, 2013

"What's In A Name?" A Case for Civil Unions from Issue 461, January 24, 2013

"Outreach: Conversation with Rep. Andrea Kieffer (R)" from Issue 462, February 7, 2013

"Carrie Chapman Catt's Winning Plan" from Issue 462, February 7, 2013

"Our Family Albums" from Issue 463, February 21, 2013

"Talking Strategy with Richard Carlbom [of Minnesotans United for All Families]" from Issue 463, February 21, 2013

"Vanguard" from Issue 464, March 7, 2013

A Case Against the Civil Unions Debate

Civil Unions Not the Answer

There has been quite a lot of commentary about same-sex marriage and the suitability of Civil Unions as a valid, easier-to-obtain alternative. Unfortunately, Civil Unions are not the answer:

1. A Minnesota Civil Union is worthless outside the state of Minnesota. No other state or country has any obligation to honor a civil construct specific to our state. Same-sex couples, “civil-unioned” or married elsewhere, who move to Minnesota would have to be “civil-unioned” again.

2. A Minnesota Civil Union is worthless to the Federal Government. Should the Supreme Court strike down Section 3 of the Defense of Marriage Act or Congress repeal it, ONLY MARRIED same-sex couples across the country would have all the Federal marriage rights and privileges available to them.

3. Separating civil unions from full, same-sex marriage opens the door for current and future discrimination against same-sex couples as it would be very easy to restrict or expand rights based on the type of arrangement you have. Separate but equal has never proven to be true.

For those who feel that civil unions are an option, especially those who may have standing within the Minnesota Republican Party, I strongly urge you to stop appeasing same-sex marriage opponents and instead engage them in conversation about how same-sex marriage supports basic Republican values: keeping government small and out of citi-

zen’s lives and promoting a positive business environment. This marriage debate is about the rights and responsibilities afforded couples by the state, not the church – do not let our conservative brothers and sisters off the hook with claims of religious infringement.

A Discussion Versus A Campaign

Throughout the Civil Unions debate many people have expressed regret that within our community we seem unwilling to have a discussion about the issue, many of us attacking those who wish to start a conversation. I purport that there is a difference between a discussion and what appears to be a campaign. A discussion is a civil dialogue between two opposing views, each presenting their facts with the goal to allow those who observe the dialogue to draw their own conclusions. A campaign is a series of orchestrated events with the specific intent to drive a particular outcome.

United We Stand...

In other states, dissension within the LGBT community has led to defeat. Prop 8, some say, was lost in California because the community couldn’t come together around a single strategy. In Minnesota, we did successfully rally together to defeat the anti-marriage amendment in November. Now we need to come together again to win full same-sex marriage equality this spring. We are a family, my LGBT siblings, and we can squabble and fight and pout all we want at home but when we step out into the public

spotlight we need to smile, hold hands and get along – after all it’s in our Minnesotan DNA.

What You Can Do Now

Despite all the satisfaction writing a pithy Facebook post can bring, channel your anger, your frustration, and your energy to prove those Civil Unioners wrong by helping us WIN full marriage equality. Here’s how:

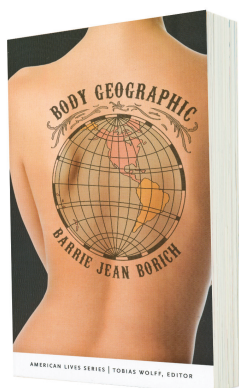
SPEAK UP: Making our voices heard in the halls and offices of the state capitol is how we win. Call your state senators and representatives and get them to support HF1054(House) and SF925(Senate). If they pledge their support, ask them to have conversations with their fence-sitting and opposition colleagues. Call your family and friends who may live in uncommitted or not supportive legislative districts and encourage them to call or email their lawmakers.

Final Thought

Courage is required for anything worth achieving. Typically it is the courage to speak up, shout out, and stand your ground. But sometimes courage comes in another form: letting go of your own convictions for the good of the community. Now is our time – united we stand.

About me: My name is Steve Pospisil. While I am a 10 year volunteer with the Human Rights Campaign and member of their national Board of Governors, my opinions are expressed solely as a concerned gay citizen of Minnesota.

Two markedly disparate books, one a memoir, one a novel, explore in their fashions the theme of selfness, who one is in place and time, and what maps the perspectives one uses to chart one's journey; guides that constitute the process of change that creates and recreates us, willy-nilly, throughout our lives.



BODY GEOGRAPHIC

Barrie Jean Borich

University of Nebraska Press

\$17.95

Borich, who literally has the skylines of Chicago and Minneapolis tattooed on her back, uses geography as metaphor to structure this intriguing memoir. The two cities are coordinates within whose parameters she ranges back and forth in time and space, from her ancestors' passage from Bohemia to America to her own American storyline melding family, gender, and perceived loyalties.

An emotional, personal cartography, *Body Geographic* is an exploration of the author's life. She ranges between her young, often out-of-control, sexually exploring self, to her past twenty years with Linnea, subject of Borich's earlier, award-winning book, "*My Lesbian Husband*". Superimposed on her own map are those of her relatives; immigrant great-grandfather, Big Petar, indomitable Gram Rose, and the myriad others who forged their own maps of a new and sometimes incomprehensible land. As Borich notes, "A map is only accurate in conjunction with the land it means to represent; if the land changes, so must the map." We each and every one of us have our own maps. As Borich writes of the maps that made her, distances between the what was, what is, what might be, she ventures beyond the mapped boundaries of her book (Beyond be monsters!) to urge the reader to consider his or her own geography. "What is the map that made you?" she asks, and welcomes a concrete, visual answer to this question, "made any way you please" that can be sent to her. To learn how, visit <http://barriejeamborich.com>.



FLYING LEAP: A NOVEL IN PERSPECTIVE

Ralf W. Oliver

Two Harbors Press

\$16.95

As its subtitle states, *Flying Leap* is, in the final analysis, a lesson in perspective. While Oliver offers the lesson to us all, this particular course is taught to an unnamed man by a pigeon. An urban tale—it takes place in midtown Manhattan—a pigeon is the ideal vehicle, to be viewed by the reader as a city dweller, feathered rat, or holy spirit, as he chooses.

Leap opens with the nameless man poised on the roof edge of a tall building. He was a successful business owner in his mid-thirties (sold his first company at twenty-three), drives a \$65,000 VW Phaeton, is a first-class wheeler-dealer and manipulator of business scenarios and people—is now ready to leap to his death after finding his accountant has skipped to the Caymans with his cash.

Enter the bird, that, as it explains, communicates, not talks. The bulk of the novel is a dialogue between the two in which the bird leads the man through a close examination of his life to this point, how he has gone astray leading with his will and ego. He has charted his map, as it were, using flawed coordinates, viewed from perspectives that have resulted in this current dire situation. It comes down, communicates the bird, to "creation expressed through choice." As the man begins to realize the difference between "living with your ego opposed to as your ego," he becomes able to take a flying leap, transforming his fall into flight.





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Transformation

A FEW weeks ago, a friend asked me to accompany him to Sunday service at All God's Children, a church on Park Avenue South in Minneapolis.

It had been a long while since I attended an actual church event that wasn't someone's funeral. I was raised Catholic, something which didn't work out so well. About six years ago, I became a Buddhist, which is my usual Sunday morning activity.

Still, because my friend had asked, I went.

The thing about All God's Children—AGC?

It's predominately a gay church. I'm sure straight people belong, too, but for the most part, GLBT people are in the majority. Pastor Kevin, the minister, is gay. Many of the church leaders are gay, lesbian or transgender. The church was filled with coupled men and coupled women, and quite a few trans folks.

In other words, the place felt like *home*, a place where I belonged.

There were some other surprises. For one, I had forgotten how beautiful a choir can sound. The AGC choir was backed up by a drummer, violinist, brass section, pianist and orchestral bass. Putting aside that most of the songs centered on God and Jesus (I know, what did I expect?), the harmonies were wonderfully rich, vibrant and warm.

I also didn't expect communion to be an emotional experience. As a Catholic, I was used to the mechanical—and austere—process of standing in line to receive a tasteless wafer. It always reminded me of herding sheep.

At ACG, communion is something entirely different. One gets their choice of actual communion—a wafer and wine, along with a big hug—or simply a prayer and hug by a lay minister. Time and again, I watched people—singles and couples—go forward and *touch*. (Another thing that Catholics don't do.) It made me consider what the world was capable of: true acceptance as human beings regardless of sexual or gender orientations.

Isn't that really what Jesus wanted before straight white people went and screwed up everything tied to religion?

The biggest surprise was the sermon, given by a guest named Brian Mogren, a former Target advertising executive who turned his life upside down in response to a "message from God" in 2007. Mogren, white and Catholic, sold his upscale Roseville house and moved to North Minneapolis, where he took in inner-city (read Black) youth. Later, he bought a multi-unit building which he turned into Alfia Place, housing to support emerging community leaders.

One of the leaders that Mogren and Alfia Place support is Mary Johnson, the founder of From Death to Life, an organization dedicated to helping mothers and their families who have lost children to homicide.

Johnson has been featured in the national media because of what she did with the man who murdered her 20 year old son, Laramiun Bird. That man, Oshea Israel (a teenager at the time of the murder), was at first hated by Johnson. For years, hatred ate away at Johnson's core. She then did the near-unthink-

able: she forgave Israel. From forgiveness flowed acceptance, and from that warmth—to the point that Johnson came to embrace Israel as her "spiritual son."

Incredibly, after Israel was released from prison, Johnson agreed to Mogren's suggestion that Israel be allowed to move into the apartment next to Johnson's apartment in Alfia Place.

As he spoke, Mogren repeatedly made the point that the only way to transform society—and give marginalized communities reason to hope that generational poverty, violence and loss can be overcome—is through "human contact." Mogren and his story, as well as that of Johnson and Israel, are examples of what near-miracles can be achieved when we view others as human beings instead of as symbols of violence or class.

It was a truly inspirational speech. I hadn't fathomed that a random invite to ACG would be so meaningful.

As the service at ACG wound down, I found myself crying. No, it wasn't God touching me, and I certainly didn't feel some out-of-body religious experience. Instead, it was simply my heart reaching out to people willing to give their—and my—community their all.

In that church on Park Avenue South, on a sunny Sunday in March, I was reminded of something incredibly important: that it's possible to transform the world.

We need only to transform ourselves first. ▣

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The Return of the Skort—Part 2 (A special Dateland noir!)

(In our first installment, I found myself trapped by a blizzard in the suburbs and was forced to take shelter at a bed and breakfast.)

Although it was midnight, the proprietress of the Auberge, the bed and breakfast weirdly positioned in the middle of a block of beige McMansions, was waiting for me with a plateful of muffins. She was a country-club blonde type, just on the wrong-side of middle-age and dressed in pastel golf wear, which I found odd given the winter storm blasting the creaking exterior of the old home. Somehow this decrepit structure had escaped the wrecking ball that had leveled all the other older homes in the neighborhood.

In spite of its name, there wasn't anything remotely French about the décor. The foyer was a riot of Christ-figurines and distressed placards emblazoned with Biblical verses. I have a high tolerance for religious wackos so I wasn't nearly as alarmed as most sensible people would be. In fact, what troubled me most were the muffins, which were enormous, bruised with blueberries and, given the late hour, rather threatening.

I reluctantly accepted a muffin, which was as dry as the broken Virgin Mary fountain in the hallway. I was weary and wanted to be taken to my room, but I could tell by her aggressive cheerfulness that this wasn't in the cards.

"Let me give you a tour!" she chirped. I suspected that I was her first guest ever and she'd been waiting to take someone—anyone—on a tour since transforming her home into a B & B, which I assumed was roughly around the same decade she baked those muffins. In order to escape, I considered blurting out something outrageously gay. I figured that would get me evicted immediately. But, sadly, my hard-wired middle-class manners prevented me from saving myself from what looked to be

hours of small-talk with this lonely woman.

The house was three stories tall, and she had a tale to tell about every one of the thousands of knickknacks that crowded the walls and shelves. She breezed past a room that she revealed to be my bedroom and, as I looked back its cozy, quilt-covered bed wistfully, she marched up to the attic.

Hoping with every fiber of my exhausted being that this was the end of the tour, I trudged up the steps after her. What I saw, though, slapped me awake. Unlike every other room in the house, it was Spartan. It contained only a female mannequin dressed in golf clothes similar to the outfit worn by my hostess. Behind it was a rack of pastel clothing.

She walked to the mannequin and lovingly brushed the front of its blouse. I now was fairly certain that this evening would end in my death and my body would be baked into muffins.

"I like the color of 'her' skirt," I said nervously, as I searched for my cell phone to call for help.

"It's not a skirt," she said. "It's a skort. Shorts that look like a skirt. I was once very friendly with a professional lady golfer. We had plans to open this B & B together, but she returned to France. Now all I have are her clothes and my faith."

She turned from the mannequin and looked at me with sad, damp eyes. I imagined the long years she waited for the golfer to return, locked in this suburban hell, and obsessively baking muffins and focusing on religion to distract herself from her heartbreak.

"I play a little golf," I said, being as gently euphemistic as possible. "Would you like to come to my room and chat while I get ready for bed?"

"Yes!" she exclaimed. "I'll just fetch us some more muffins and we can talk all night!" □

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Dear Ms. Behavior:

I feel that you are the only one who can help me in this crisis, and indeed I have nowhere else to turn. Here is my dilemma: I happen to look good in white and I want to wear it all the time. Now that I've come back from a warm vacation and Spring is coming, I don't want to wait until Memorial Day. So, what is the big deal about wearing white after the "appropriate" season? I asked a friend who is from the "old school of southern ways" and I thought that she could help, but she didn't clarify anything. She merely told me that it's "tacky." Can you help?

-M

Dear M:

Ms. Behavior herself makes it a practice to never wear white so as not to be mistaken for a bride or a virgin. But if you can well (which Ms. Behavior does not) and feel compelled to show off, you may not be able to resist wearing the contrasting non-color. This may sometimes be forgiven, unless you wear white shoes. (White shoes in general are a no-no unless you're a woman attending her own wedding. Why, you may ask? Because white shoes are dorky.)

Wearing white in general has its hazards. First, if you drop food on your white shirt, it won't blend in. Second, you can't get away with much perspiration. Most importantly, of course, white is not slimming. But none of the above addresses the seasonality issue

that you ask about.

The main reason for not wearing white after Labor Day is so that you don't risk being mistaken for a straight Miami drug dealer, a male nurse, or a Palm Springs golf dandy. But if you're not concerned about your image, there's no reason to pay attention to such stringent and arbitrary fashion guidelines. So, Ms. Behavior gives you her permission to break all the fashion rules. Live it up. Wear socks with your sandals. Wear a belt with your suspenders. If you don't have any clean black socks, wear the nubby beige ones that your aunt gave you for Christmas. And wear a smile when you sit alone on Saturday nights, washing your hair and watching the weekend television lineup.

Dear Ms. Behavior:

I am part of a church and sing in the gospel group. A couple of months ago, my partner and I eloped but placed our wedding announcement in the local newspaper. While some members of my church reacted to the news with delight, several were surprised though I've never hidden my relationship with my husband. Three choir members cornered me and said that homosexuality is against their religious beliefs; they said that they are uncomfortable around me and wish that I would quit the choir.

So, should I quit? Refuse to quit? Should I gather a bunch of queers to picket outside our next rehearsal? I'm torn because I re-

ally enjoyed this group, but this recent turn of events threatens to suck the fun out of it for me.

-SAM

Dear Sam:

Don't allow these so-called Christians to closet their unbrotherly stance against you. Talk to the pastor and a few of the friendlier congregants. Get the media involved. If you feel forced to leave, it would be best to go out with a bang (preferably on the church lawn).

If reasonable conversation and bad publicity don't appeal to you, you could offer to resign, but on the condition that you're allowed to do one last solo performance. Then come up with a series of songs expressing your position. (Think of it as "The Sodomy Medley.") Your friends will surely be able to help you re-write the lyrics to some classic church tunes so that worshipers will barely remember that "Amazing Grace" didn't previously include references to fellatio and that "Ave Maria" isn't about a drag queen.

But despite fighting a good fight against the homophobes, if you don't find that you have enough like-minded friends and fans, you may still want to find a friendlier place to sing. Consider forming your own gospel choir with like-minded queers. ■

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The Singularity

MYSTERY, WHAT so we desperately enjoy, is painful when it lives at home. A “nothing” explanation for anything won’t do. We need a Something to explain away our troubles.

Or to bring them on.

It’s like putting together a puzzle without having the box. You have in front of you a thousand pieces of information but haven’t any idea as to how they fit together. Some of it is easy enough, sure, but you know you’re missing more pieces than you have. So what do you do? You take what you know and envision how the rest of the puzzle should look to create your own reality, as beautiful, though devastating, might it be...

It starts always with an infinitely dense, nearly invisible, point in reality. I’ll be geeky and call it a Singularity.

The Singularity is a pinprick of information in disagreement with the reality you’ve interpreted. Let’s say you expect your boyfriend to say he loves you just before you hang up the phone. Not only have you grown accustomed to hearing it, you also expect that he will say it first. Not a universal or even justifiable expectation, but you get the picture.

Then one day on a happy drive home from work, a conversation with him ends with no “I love you.” A trivial, but noticeable, disappointment. You’ll brush off the event, and maybe forget it ever happened.

Sting The Singularity is born.

Two weeks later he is home very late from work without calling. This happens, though rarely, but for some reason this time is different. This time it slows you down a little more than usual. You’re somewhat skeptical, but irrationally so. You brush it off.

Another week later he’s late but brings home flowers and oodles of affection. He’s more playful than usual. It’s not like him. Not even close. Is this genuine, or does he feel guilty about something? It’s probably nothing. You enjoy him like this, so whatever. Tickle away!

And comes another week. You’re in a rush ending a telephone conversation with him and so this time you go first: “I love you!” you say. “Yep,” he responds monotonously. No “I love you, too.” You’re being too critical, right?

So here you are now, with three tiny, disparate, insignificant pieces of information that, one on top of another, don’t fit with your interpretation of your relationship. They’re nothing that should bother you, you know that. You tell yourself to ignore them all, but your mind is on guard behind the scenes. Something is different. And that something must be explained. “It’s nothing” won’t cut it.

You find yourself scrutinizing more and more of what he does, how he acts. You hate to admit it, but you sometimes worry when

he’s out with his friends or is late from work. No way he’s losing interest in you. Right?

Eventually comes the time you’re no longer observing with increased scrutiny. Your mind can’t find an explanation for why things feel different. It must engineer its own. So it stops observing and it starts *searching*.

Minds go searching when solving a mystery, which is all and well in science and health and God and so on, but maybe not always ideal in matters of romance. In the matter of romance, the mind searches only when it thinks something is wrong, and if it’s on a quest, it’ll create a problem to explain a problem.

Inside two months you’ve gone from honeymoon-happy to full-fledged insecure. Though there’s no proof of anything, not so much as a shred of reliable circumstantial evidence, you’re convinced of *something*. You don’t know what. But it’s not nothing.

Your mind goes wild. The interrogations begin. The arguments follow. He assures you he’s faithful, and you want to believe it (or do you?). Hearts are broken and mended again and again. There are ups and downs, then hills and valleys, then hills and hells—a universe of insecurity. Wherever it goes no one knows...

And it all started with a simple, forgettable, hardly noteworthy, pinprick.

The Singularity. ■

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